

Hypothesis Concerning the Development of Misophonia

Sometime in 2021

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Introduction

Misophonia, although only recently clinically identified, has likely been with mankind for eons. It is defined as feelings of irrational and intense hatred directed at someone for making audible chewing noises.

Abstract

Although this has been written off as irrational behavior, it may have an evolutionary explanation. I propose that the explanation lies in the human instinct to hew toward conformity and to avoid attention. Furthermore, it may be explained by the psychological phenomenon of self-consciousness, which may also be explained in an evolutionary context.

In the evolutionary context, behaviors which set individuals apart from other members of their own tribe can lead to alienation from one's own tribe. When one individual observes a behavior in another which is flagrantly flamboyant, they may seek actively to avoid even subtle exemplifications of that behavior due to a cycle of observation and self-consciousness. An individual with misophonia identifies the chewing of others as obnoxious and then, suddenly realizing that they, themselves are chewing, even if more quietly, becomes embarrassed. They blame the other party for the embarrassment they feel at the behavior of the other.

Tribes, historically, also tend toward general conformity with neighboring tribes and there is therefore a logical basis for internal pressure from within a tribe to behave in a way which draws as little attention as possible. This behavior may have an even earlier origin in individuals' desire to consume food secretly during times of famine.

Conclusion

Misophonia should not be treated as an abnormal psychological manifestation but rather normal behavior consistent with human evolution.